

Hebden Bridge Local History Society News

www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk

Spring 2013



*Orthostat walling in Norland being surveyed by Local History member Dave Shepherd. English Heritage have given Grade II listed protection to the wall and stated that this is a rare example of a regionally distinctive farming practice.
(Photo: Brian Howcroft)*

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family history and folklore.

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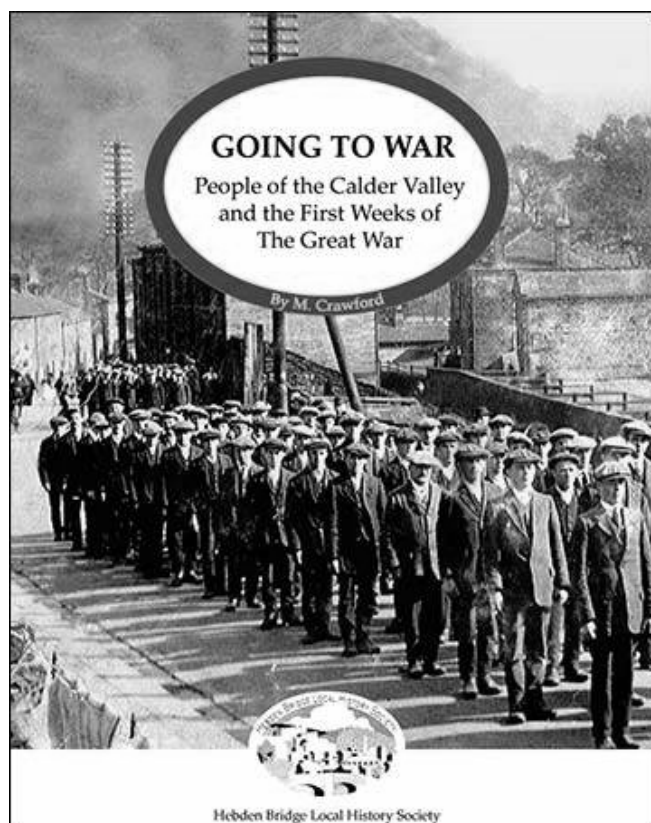
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membership@hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk
with your name and membership number.**

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter. Here you'll find reports of the activities of the Society, particularly reports of the excellent lecture series (many thanks to the speakers and our reporters), together with details of the Family History, Pre-History and Folklore sections. The next edition will be published in August and we'd welcome your input – queries, discoveries to share, and information about local history events or projects happening in the area.

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Forthcoming publication ...available soon



The purpose of this new book, by former history teacher Mike Crawford, is to review the opening weeks of the war and the response of local people to those events: their experience at home and in uniform. How far does this experience match the national picture of those weeks? Did they march off with bands playing? Probably. Did they think it would be over by Christmas? Doubtful. There are letters, books and diaries, recorded interviews with local people recalling the start of the war; local newspapers and regimental war diaries. But these sources will never provide the full picture. There will be many items of information kept privately, in church or club or family memories, which are difficult to track down. Of special help would be information about the experience of soldiers, families and businesses.

The book has an index of local people and appendices including details of local men who were killed in 1914, and also the men of 2nd Battalion the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment who were killed before Christmas 1914. It is due to be published later this year.

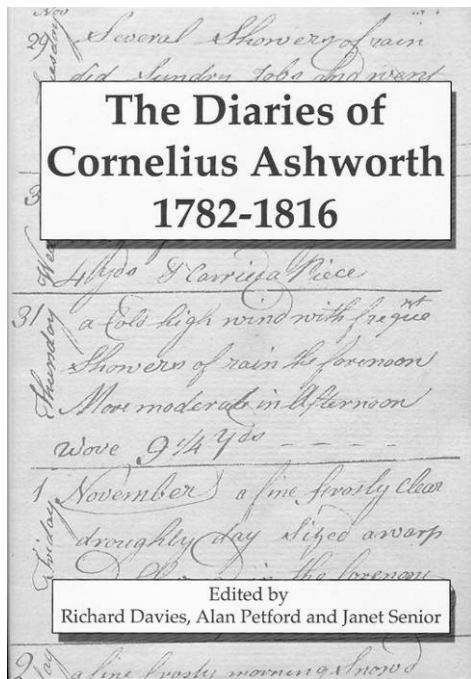
Mike is already in the process of collecting further information on the wartime experience of local people. See:

<http://www.hebdenbridgehistory.org.uk/news/2.html>

Reports on the 2012 – 13 Lectures

The world of Cornelius Ashworth

Alan Petford



The name Cornelius Ashworth has featured in the footnotes of history as a useful example of the kind of hard-pressed weaver-farmer who typified the economy of nineteenth-century Halifax. His name is known largely because of four diaries from 1782 to 1816 preserved by the Halifax Antiquarian Society in West Yorkshire Archives. But as local historian Alan Petford told the audience at the first of this season's meetings of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society, this simplistic caricature turns out to be untrue. Alan Petford has led a group in Hebden Bridge who have carefully transcribed

the diaries, and conducted detailed research into the life that is recorded there. Far from being poor, he married into a wealthy family, and his wife's farm, Walt Royd (in Ovenden) was one of the very few that was owner occupied. Walt Royd and the land surrounding it is almost unchanged since Cornelius Ashworth left it.

Alan Petford's fascinating talk provided an intriguing glimpse into the life of this nineteenth-century Halifax man. The diaries contain no trace of scandal, gossip or personal feeling, but they do provide a wealth of information about the farming practices on a nineteenth-century Pennine farm. Cornelius Ashworth recorded how he employed men in 'graving': a local technique for preparing the land where it was impossible to use a plough. He also used an innovative technique called 'water-furrowing,' diverting water to provide controlled flooding that would ensure an early crop of grass. Excitingly, traces of the water furrows and the remains of the weir can still be seen at Walt Royd.

In the usual pattern for a Pennine hill-farmer Cornelius Ashworth was also a weaver of worsted cloth. This was an activity that could be slotted into the farming year when things were not so busy. But Cornelius Ashworth had

many other strings to his bow: the evidence is, Mr Petford explained, that he was a man keen to make money. He seems not to have been a skilled man, but he took on building and quarrying work and selling hops, collecting his 'pocket of hops' (a man-sized sack) from the wharf at Salter Hebble, and selling them to brewers and local families.

Much of his time was spent working in the countryside, but his heart was in the town of Halifax, and especially at Square Chapel, of which he was a founding member. It was here that he spent most Sundays, listening to the sermons of Mr Titus Knight, and recording in his diaries details of the Bible readings which provided the starting point of these lessons. His religious faith was probably what led him to keep the diaries: he was attempting to 'redeem the time' and show that his was a life well spent.

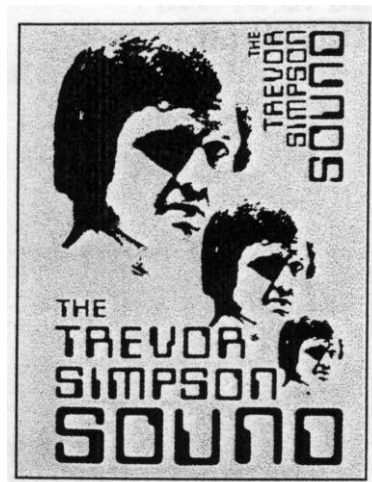
The detailed questions posed by the audience reflected that the time taken to transcribe these diaries and conduct the background research has definitely been time well spent. The resulting *Diaries of Cornelius Ashworth* edited by Richard Davies, Alan Petford, and Janet Senior is available from the society and from local bookshops.

Sheila Graham

Small Town Saturday Night

The story of a love affair with rock 'n roll at its peak in the 1950s and 60s was told with humour, music and shared memories when Trevor Simpson reminded members of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society of Halifax's heyday as a centre for dance and pop performances. Trevor has recorded the history of the town's dance halls from their beginnings after the Second World War when demobbed bandsmen decided to carry on playing, and local Mayor Charlie Lucas opened two ballrooms to cater for the growing passion for dancing. Other larger than life characters in the story were the three Crabtree brothers, bouncers turned impresarios, and Pearl Paling, a diminutive dancer with an unerring ability to pick a winning act.

Trevor Simpson



At the Marlborough Hall (YMCA building) and Empress Ballroom (above what is now Macdonald's) the tempo was strictly ballroom, but with the arrival of rock 'n' roll, the Victoria Hall came into its own. Trevor dazzled the audience with the names of the stars of the era who made their way to Halifax: Cliff Richard with his pink jacket and luminous socks played at the Odeon, which also saw Gene Vincent, Billy Fury and the first solo performance of Dusty Springfield. According to his autobiography, it was in the dressing room of the Princess Ballroom that Ray Davies of the Kinks learned that he was to be a father. There were also the ones that got away – £35 for the Beatles, even with Cilla Black thrown in, was too much for the management of the Marlborough.

An alternative venue for jazz and blues lovers was provided by some entrepreneurial schoolboys who opened the Plebeians Jazz club, and would regularly poach performers from the Victoria Hall to continue playing late into the night in their club.

The growth of large venues in the seventies saw the end of the touring bands coming to small towns on a Saturday night, but there was yet another famous performer who not only came to Halifax, but stayed. New Orleans Bluesman Champion Jack Dupree married a local girl and settled in Ovenden, where a new generation of blues players such as Eric Clapton made a pilgrimage to meet him. He is commemorated by a small plaque in Dean Clough.

Trevor's tireless research into the stories of Small Town Saturday Night has been preserved in two books of that name.

Sheila Graham

Club Houses: self help and co-operation

Julie Cockburn

A small row of houses in Old Town, called Club Houses, encapsulates some of the history and spirit of the Calder Valley. Julie Cockburn told a meeting of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society how she had always been attracted by the sunny spot and the extensive views and leapt at the chance to purchase one. This led to Julie and her neighbours carrying out some fascinating research, using deeds, chapel records and censuses, to uncover the history of Club Houses. The terrace in Old Town is one of several in the valley to go by the name Club Houses, built in the early 19th century by

self-help groups or clubs whose original purpose was to defray the cost of burial. Some of these burial societies were very successful, and building houses was a way to invest their capital.

The Lane Ends Burial Society responsible for building Old Town Club Houses met at the Hare and Hounds and built the cottages in 1823. They were originally designed as weavers' cottages, at a time when hand-loom weaving was still a profitable trade, with a shared weaving room on the top floor, with connecting doors between the houses to enable workers to get access to the shared room. The census returns showed that most of the residents were engaged in worsted weaving until the trade began to fail later in the century. Many of the small cottages housed families of six or seven adults: impossible to imagine now.



The 'poverty knocking' of the looms in the shared weaving room was replaced by other sounds as the century progressed and factories replaced the domestic system. Instead came the sounds of reading aloud from newspapers, bible and political texts, as the Club Room was used as a reading room, library and a day school for the half timers who worked in the nearby Acre Mill. Adults and children continued their education in the lime-washed room with its rows of benches, stove and simple pulpit.

Despite modernisation, the stones of the old cottages can still tell the story of a group of local people who worked together to improve their lives.

Sheila Graham

'Their name liveth for evermore?'

Mike Edwards



Remembrance Sunday calls together members of local communities to stand in front of the war memorial and honour those who served and died in wars. These memorials have been a familiar part of our townscapes since the end of World War One, but as Mike Edwards told a meeting of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society, memorials can be found in many forms and in unusual places. Mike's work

in recording local memorials for the archive of the Imperial War Museum has found memorials in chapels and cricket clubs, drinking fountains, book dedications, stained glass windows and even pipe organs, as well as the more familiar statues of anonymous soldier heroes.

Rolls of honour in chapels and clubs claimed those whose bodies lay 'somewhere in France' for the local communities. Those who had served became heroes, celebrated for their loyalty to the community they came from. One of the most moving memorials is a plaque at Victoria Station in Manchester, recording those who passed through the gate on their way to the trenches of France. There is little evidence of triumphalism in the memorials; an inscription on a grave at Slack records a son who 'passed from this awful war into perfect peace' and there is the bleakness of a young man 'not seen or heard of since.'

Many communities incorporated a memorial in a project to benefit the living, such as playing fields and parks, new Sunday School buildings and church organs. Hebden Bridge itself had an elaborate scheme which would have provided a cottage hospital and ambulance alongside a memorial cross. However there was considerable controversy, and the costs proved prohibitive. In the end, Hebden Bridge's memorial garden was not finished until 1938. Those who attended the opening could not have known how soon they would be fighting another war.

The work done by Mike Edwards and other volunteers is an attempt to ensure that the memorials of war and their dreams of a more peaceful world are not forgotten and his talk provided much to reflect on.

Sheila Graham

Dawson City and the building of the Walshaw Dean Reservoirs

Ann Kilbey and
Corinne McDonald

Compared to the history of the textile mills, the history of the dams and reservoirs has had relatively limited coverage. This lecture, which had been eagerly anticipated by many members of the Hebden Bridge Local History Society, was linked to the publication of a new book on Dawson City and the Walshaw Dean Reservoirs called 'City in the Hills'.



The lecture was a *tour de force* by the joint authors Corinne McDonald and Ann Kilbey, ably assisted by Frank Woolrych (who was also the picture editor for the book). The research broke new ground in looking at the difficulties Enoch Tempest had with the tendering exercise and thus the consequences of winning a contract he did not really want. It alluded to the machinations that on the one hand presented a stream of financial difficulties for Tempest, whilst at the same time allowed the creation of a waterman's 'cottage' with a Carrera marble fireplace! Of equal importance has been the exploration of the social history that is linked to Dawson City. The Navvies' Mission, the first aid training by the site doctor, the lack of licensed premises on the site and the presence of 'The Band of Hope' and the use of the census

to demolish the myth that all Navvies were Irish labourers all broke new ground and destroyed some stereotypical assumptions as did a more detailed understanding of the small pox outbreak, the consequent reception the workers received in the neighbourhood and the articulate nature of the 'Nomads' response.

The long and detailed questioning demonstrated the links many members families had in the past with Dawson City and the Reservoirs. The questioning also established that this is a fertile field for further research, with plenty of material out there waiting to be recorded.

Dave Smalley

Lament for the Mills

Robert Cockcroft



Robert Cockcroft, poet and academic, returned to his roots in the Calder Valley and recalled his childhood spent close to the mills in Todmorden and Walsden owned and operated by his grandfather, John Cockcroft and his father, Keith. Speaking to Hebden Bridge Local History Society, he wove together the poems from his collection 'Lament for the Mills' with some remarkable photographs, to re-create an atmospheric picture of the mills, the

people and the landscape that inspired his work. The stories told by his father, as well as his own memories, lent vividness to the descriptions of the processes of weaving and informed the dialogues Robert recreates in his poems. The Cockcroft boys – his father and four brothers – were encouraged to have free run of the mill to explore and experiment. On one occasion Robert's father and uncle unwittingly unleashed the power of the great water wheel and were caught up in its rotation, narrowly escaping injury. In his poem re-telling this story, Robert makes the link between this spirit of exploration and the ground-breaking experiments undertaken by his other uncle, scientist John Cockcroft, which resulted in the splitting of the atom.

There were portraits in words and pictures of remarkable people, including some outspoken correspondence between his great-grandmother and great-grandfather in the days when their courtship was not going so well: *'you need not think because you've got a cage, you can have any woman for the asking'*. What emerged most strongly was the pride of the community, the invention, the skill and the industry of a lost era; it was refreshing to see and hear the valley's textile heritage memorialised in poetry.

Sheila Graham

'Untold Stories' A glimpse into the lives of local people

Tony Wright

Hebden Bridge is a remarkable place and we at the Local History Society are eager to preserve the many diverse aspects of life in the area throughout the ages. Tony Wright of Wild Rose Arts is a local historian who is active in recording present day life as an archive for future generations. For the past ten years he has been collecting personal life stories on film and audio tape and last week he shared with us a video compilation some of these recordings.



War Letter – When the boys come home.

The theme of change was the main thread linking the projects. Significantly, it has been the adaptability of the people who live here that has influenced both change and continuity. The challenge of the group was to collect experiences and thoughts that rarely get put into books or make the headlines.

We were treated to a film which showed the diversity of people who live in the valley; the elderly and their reminiscences of life in the past; people born in other countries who live here now; the young who will form the community of the future; the artistic element both in music and creative media; and newly-formed groups such as the skate-boarders. Also we heard about Fair Trade, Transition Town status, Treesponsibility, Incredible Edible, all the little shops, local breweries, alternative therapies and the festivals and parades, some old, some new, that make Hebden Bridge such an interesting place to live.

The film showed just a small sample of the many hours of recordings that Tony has collected over the past ten years. Tony said that he had tried to show the diversity and difference of local people and a glimpse into how the new people added to the diversity and difference.

The digital archive will certainly be a valuable record of life in Hebden Bridge for many generations still to come. For further information see www.wildrosearts.net

Barbara Atack

Hebden Bridge Railway Station in the Nineteenth Century

David Taylor

As commuters huddle from the cold in the waiting rooms on Hebden Bridge Station, they can glimpse something of how the railways used to be in the photographic displays provided by the Friends of Hebden Bridge Station. An eager audience at a meeting of Hebden Bridge Local History Society learnt much more from the researches of David Taylor, member of both societies, and railway enthusiast.

The coming of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway through the Calder Valley transformed more than the landscape, David Taylor explained. At first it was envisaged only as a means of transporting freight and servicing the growing industrial towns, but the potential for transporting passengers soon

became apparent. On one of the first journeys between Sowerby Bridge and Hebden Bridge, when every available place was taken, people climbed up on top of the carriages, precariously standing most of the way and ducking down when the train went through tunnels. Railway travel became hugely popular, turning Hebden Bridge, Hardcastle Crag and Hollingworth Lake into tourist destinations for thousands of ordinary people. A day trip from Hebden Bridge in 1844 saw hundreds flocking to be on the train at 6.30 in the morning to stand up in the third class open waggon all the way to Hull and back!



View of the railway west of Hebden Bridge station by A F Tait.

The first Hebden Bridge Railway station opened in 1840, with a small booking office and separate waiting rooms for the first class ladies and gentlemen. Eventually public pressure and competition forced the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway to improve its facilities, providing warehouses, goods yards, a general waiting room and eventually the new station constructed in 1891. Now, what had been called the 'neatest station on the line' still serves the town, and has a band of faithful friends. Further information : www.hbstationfriends.org.uk

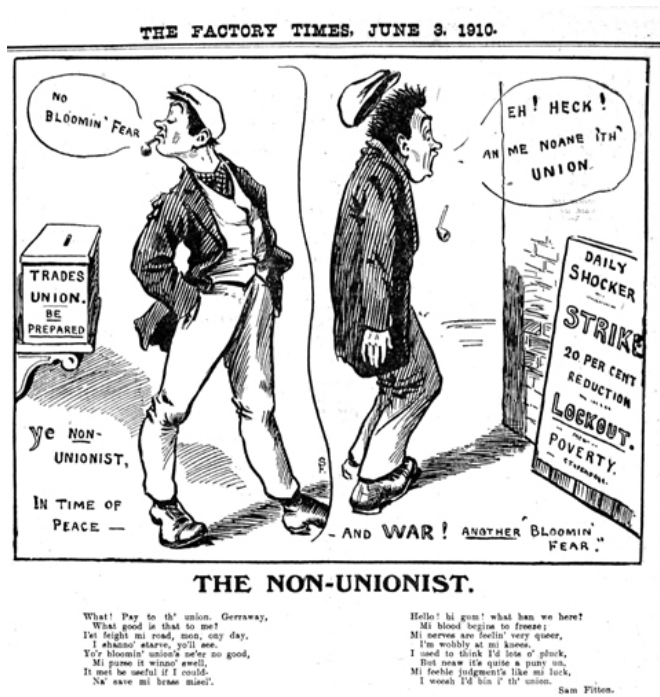
Sheila Graham

Todmorden Weavers and the Great War

Alan Fowler

At a time when cotton was king, the Todmorden Weavers' Association, the premier trades union in the Upper Calder Valley, was about to face the turmoil of the Great War. Alan Fowler, former lecturer in Economic and Social History at Manchester Metropolitan University told us that membership in Todmorden and Hebden Bridge reached more than 4,000 at its peak. Unlike other industries, women, who made up the majority of weavers, were paid equally with men, and the union leaders were selected by examination to ensure they could work out the complicated piece-work rates. In May 1914, the prestigious Weavers' Institute on Burnley Road was opened amid great celebration, reflecting the status of the union on the brink of the First World War.

During the early part of the war when exports of cotton cloth were hit, the weavers were forced to work 'short time' and suffer the consequent loss of earnings. Then, as the war progressed, men, driven by lack of work as well as patriotic fervour, went away to the front as volunteers, leaving the industry seriously short of labour. This was made worse once conscription was introduced in 1916, and late in 1917 after America joined the war there was also a severe shortage of raw cotton.



These events were made vivid through a collection of remarkable cartoons. Sam Fitton, a weaver, music hall artiste, dialect poet and cartoonist, contributed his powerful cartoons to the Cotton Factory Times throughout this period. They capture the mood of the times, depicting the fight against conscription and upper class trickery as well as to save the greatly weakened king cotton. Alan has curated an exhibition of these cartoons at the People's History Museum in Manchester.

Sheila Graham

Grave Concerns; mysterious goings-on in Calderdale Kai Roberts

From hero of medieval ballads to potential vampire is quite a journey, but when the name is Robin Hood, it's not such a surprising one. Kai Roberts, local folklorist, told us of the stories which have attached themselves to the death and burial of the Yorkshire outlaw, and especially to the monument known as Robin Hood's Grave on the Kirklees Hall Estate.

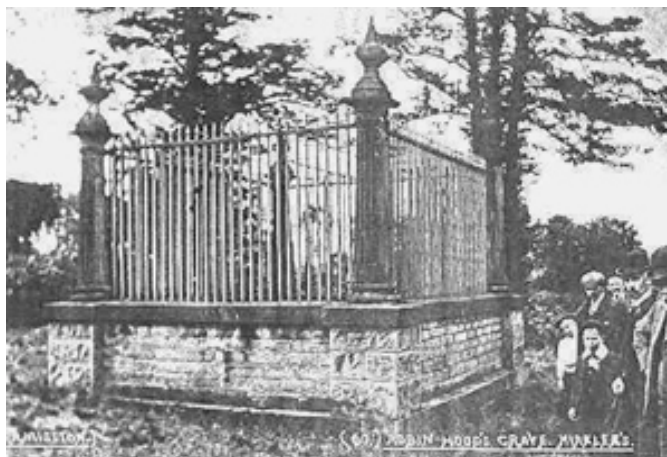
Early ballads told how the outlaw went to the nuns of Kirklees Priory to cure his sickness through the ancient practice of blood-letting, but that the evil prioress let him bleed to death. He was then buried close to the highway, at some distance from the consecrated ground of the church.

In this place there is indeed a monument, one much altered especially during the romantic period of the nineteenth century, but clearly marked on the OS map, and containing an ancient grave stone.

There is no clear evidence that a single person called Robin Hood ever existed, and the name could in fact be a generic name for a roguish wandering robber. However, legends, as Kai explained, are often as significant as facts, and this particular landscape has been invested with magic and mystery over the centuries.

The atmospheric location of the grave with its ancient stone and illegible inscription has inspired many stories, from the prosaic to the fanciful. It was rumoured that a chip off the gravestone was a charm against toothache, and in the 1960s a fashion all things gothic transformed the story of the blood-letting prioress into a vampire tale, with tales of a hooded figure with dark mad eyes. Now the grave can occasionally be visited as part of the Calderdale Heritage walks.

Sheila Graham



A postcard showing a visit to Robin Hood's Grave on the Kirklees Estate.

William Greenwood of Pudsey

Malcolm Heywood

Working from home is not a new concept. In 1825 William Greenwood of the small Stansfield settlement of Pudsey in the Cliviger Valley wrote a diary. William was at that time a handloom weaver who supplemented his income by maintaining several different occupations. He was a teacher on Sundays and Wednesday nights, a small scale money lender and he involved himself in other aspects of the home based textile industry, paid as a 'twister-in'. But history is not just measured in 'pieces' of calico. He was a perceptive diarist and as a result of the moderate upturn in trade his diary chronicles what he did with his less regimented time. He drank in 'The Roebuck' at Portsmouth and walked over the hill passed the farm of 'Brown Birks' Here he wooed the occupant, but she was having none of it and closed the shutters on him! An intimate detail that adds to walking in the area. He went to look at a swarm of bees. Perhaps they were intended for the bee boles at his family house. At one point he walked up the Long Causeway to Hawkstones where for 4/6d he had his shoes soled. As his total income for the year was about £20 clearly the shoes must have been quite something. Another day he and his companion walked over to Noahdale Dam, perhaps to view Gamaliel Sutcliffe's alterations. This was entertaining lecture by Malcolm Heywood one of the joint authors of 'A History of Todmorden'. It is a pity though that the diary has not been published or at least preserved in facsimile.

David Smalley

*Pudsey hamlet
in the valley to
the north-west of
Todmorden,
home of William
Greenwood.*



Bridge Mill, History on our doorstep

Justine Wyatt



Few who visit the atmospheric Bridge Mill, realise the richness of its history, with records stretching back 700 years. Local historian Justine Wyatt, with the support of the mill's current owner David Fletcher, has uncovered more of the story of the building.

The water-powered medieval corn mill would have been timber-framed. The tenants of the lord of the manor were obliged to take their corn there. The court rolls of the manor of Wadsworth give some

fascinating insights into the mill's medieval past: one Stephen the Miller was named in many disputes, including some which accused him of cheating (which millers were often accused of doing) and the miller's inability to prevent 'the mill going away on account of the flood' in 1336 will arouse sympathy in many Hebden Bridge shopkeepers today.

The milling and the disputes continued into the nineteenth century, with tenant Champion Murgatroyd fighting to protect his water courses and in turn being accused of adulterating the flour with alum.

The building was extended and rebuilt in stone, but was probably still a corn mill in 1860. But by 1871 there was a tall chimney for steam-powered cotton spinning. More recently, clothing manufacturers Greenwood and Pickles attached a generator to the wheel to run their machines, and eventually to supply electric lighting.

When David Fletcher rescued the derelict mill in 1973, a new phase began, and with the installation of a new wheel and the Archimedes Screw which will generate electricity, it will soon be water powered again. The story of Bridge Mill truly reflects the adaptability of local people as it continues to be part of the social and economic life of the town.

Sheila Graham

Family History Group

Monumental Inscriptions at Heptonstall

For the past three years, the Family History Group has been continuing the work of transcribing the inscriptions on the graves in Heptonstall churchyard. This is still very much a 'work in progress' but we have had many requests about graves and felt it useful to publish our work to date. The transcriptions so far are now accessible on the HBLHS web site.

There are around 2,000 gravestones in the churchyard. Of these we have now transcribed about 1,400. About 600 of these transcriptions were completed several years ago under the guidance of Ken Stott, but the work ceased with his death in 2003. There are three adjacent churchyards at Heptonstall. The oldest is around the Old Church and graves here date back to about 1600, the second part around the New Church with graves dating back to about 1830. The third and newer churchyard is across Back Lane and was opened in 1911. There are some post 1911 graves and inscriptions still to be found in the old churchyard, especially where there were multiple plots. As yet no transcriptions have been made in the New Graveyard.

There are still many gravestones to transcribe and all help is very welcome. A group met on April 6th to further the work on the transcriptions and will meet again in May. If you would like to be involved please contact me.

We have had many new visitors at our meetings this year, several from abroad, here to trace ancestral roots. Future meetings of the Family History group continue on Saturdays and Thursdays at the Birchcliffe Centre from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm (Details on back cover).

Barbara Atack

Contact phone: 01422 842105 Email ataxjb@btinternet.com

Archive and Library Opening Times 2013

	Wednesday 2 - 5 pm	Saturday 10 am - 1 pm
April	10th	27th
May	8th	25th
June	12th	22nd
July	10th	27th
August	14th	24th
September	11th	28th
October	9th	26th
November	13th	23rd
December	11th	Not open

Family History Meeting Times

Two dates (highlighted) do not follow the usual pattern of first Saturday and third Thursday of each month.

	Saturday 2 – 5 pm	Thursday 2 – 5 pm
April	6	18
May	4	16
June	1	13
July	6	18
August	3	15
September	7	19
September	28	
October		17
November	2	21
December	7	No meeting

The Birchcliffe Centre
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